

President and others who are dealing with this issue.

As you know, there has been no specific request directed to the Congress at this point in time, either by General McChrystal, Secretary Gates, or the President, so that it may well be an issue of timing as to when they're ready to come to the Congress to lay out the specific plans that they believe we ought to pursue. But I think that everyone shares the conviction that this is a critical issue with which the Congress is going to deal, and that General McChrystal, who is the commander on the ground in Afghanistan, needs to come before the Congress and give us his best judgment as to how we can be successful.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman. And I know it's just been reported that in the Senate there was an amendment offered by Senator McCain on this very point, requiring there to be some testimony by General McChrystal before Congress by a date certain. And I'm told that that amendment went down on a party-line vote. So I would just tell the gentleman, again, that our side believes it's very important, as I know he does, in terms of our national security and Congress' role that General McChrystal be before us so that we can be informed and conduct our constitutional duty as such.

□ 1445

If I could, Mr. Speaker, turn to the question of jobs.

We have a running debate, the gentleman and I and others, as to the effectiveness of the stimulus bill. And as we all know, back in January it was reported that that bill would arrest the rise of unemployment. In fact, the goal was set that unemployment would not overreach beyond 8½ percent. We know in this country now we're just under 10 percent unemployment nationally.

I feel very strongly, Mr. Speaker, that we should be focusing on this economy while we're trying to deal with so many other issues. And it has been some time now where we have missed the opportunity on this floor to bring up bills that have to do with job creation.

If we look at some of the evidence of the stimulus bill, it is the contention of our side that that bill has not fulfilled its mission. We could go through any list of expenditures that we have noted in the press and elsewhere, where you have got \$2.8 million to fight forest fires in the District of Columbia; you have \$3.4 million to help turtles cross the road in Florida. These are the kinds of items that, frankly, rob the public of their confidence in what we do.

So I would ask the gentleman, is there any effort, is there any hope that we may perhaps have some constructive debate around the rest of the stimulus money and perhaps orient that towards job creation, sustainable job creation and growth in the economy? Because after all, I think that's what all of us are after.

I yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And he's correct: we do have a different perspective on this. Of course, the gentleman supported economic policies in 2001 and 2003 that of course produced the worst job performance of any administration since Herbert Hoover. We lost 3.1 million jobs in the last 14 months of the Bush administration, lost an average of 680,000 jobs during the last 3 months of the administration that President Obama was faced with.

We acted decisively and boldly, in my opinion, under the President's leadership. In point of fact, we reduced the average of some 680,000 in the last 3 months of the Bush administration to, over the last 3 months, 350,000 and only 216,000 jobs lost. I say "only." That relates to 741,000 jobs lost the last month of the Bush administration. That is a half a million fewer jobs. It's not where we want to be, but it is certainly a lot better.

Many economists in our party and, frankly, in your party, Mr. Zandi we refer to, estimate that we have over a million jobs more than we would have had had we not passed the Recovery and Reinvestment Act. There has been a 1.3 percent rise in consumer spending in August. It was the biggest increase since the 2.8 surge in October of 2001. The Labor Department released a report last week showing that during the previous week, the number of newly laid-off workers seeking unemployment benefits fell for the third straight week, evidence that layoffs are continuing to ease at the earliest stages of the economic recovery.

Without going into a lot more statistics, we do have a substantive difference as to whether or not our economy is getting better. The good news, from my perspective, is most economists agree with us that we've bottomed out and we're starting to come up. We're going to have unemployment figures tomorrow that will be announced. Hopefully, they're down even further.

The stock market, I will tell my friend, in the Recovery and Reinvestment he thinks hasn't worked is up from about 7,200–7,300 up to about 9,700. I will tell you that every American that opens their 401(k) or retirement plan thinks that progress has been made. I know I do when I open mine. I am very pleased to see that.

So we do differ. We differ not only on the success of the economic plan that was pursued for 8 years that led to the deepest recession that we have had in 75 years.

But the gentleman stands and asked me a question about adopting more of those policies, and with all due respect, my friend, we didn't think those policies were going to work, we don't think they did work, and, in fact, the policies that your party voted against to a person in 1993 produced exactly the opposite results: high employment, low deficits; in fact, a net surplus at the

end of the 8 years of the Clinton administration, and a reduction in spending which you doubled in terms of percentage, 3.5 under the Clinton years and 7 percent under President Bush's years. So, yes, we have a difference of opinion.

We think we have pursued vigorously policies to create jobs, create economic stability, create growth in our economy, and we think it's working.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentleman. I would say in response, I, nor most of my conference, was not here in 1993 on that vote.

I would simply say to the gentleman, as he knows, in the stimulus debate and on down through the rest—cap-and-trade, the health care, the budget debate—the proposals that we are offering, especially as he refers to in the economic arena, are not the same policies. We have proffered an agenda which speaks to small businesses.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would say I don't think it is necessarily a constructive route to take for us to say who was worse because none of us, as the gentleman suggests, likes the fact that we've lost 2½ million jobs in the last 8 months. And if you ask the small business people in our districts if they think things are better, I think there's pretty much unanimity that small businesses are having difficulties still keeping the lights on, maintaining payroll.

Something is amiss. We've got to be focusing on how we can expand the opportunity for those small businesses to grow again. It's very central to the idea of getting the capital markets straight, of getting our fiscal house in order. I am very troubled by the bills that are coming along in the Financial Services Committee, the Consumer Financial Protection Agency, yet more attempts by the majority to impose the will of Washington on the entrepreneurs across this country, restricting ultimately their ability to access credit.

You know, we do have differences, Mr. Speaker. I am just hopeful that we can find a way to work together to promote jobs.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for his time.

#### --- **HOURLY OF MEETING ON TOMORROW**

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow; and, further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6, 2009, for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

#### --- **THE STIMULUS PACKAGE HAS BEEN PRODUCTIVE**

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)